THE ANARCHIST'S
VICTORY GARDEN

i always swore i had a brown thumb. house-
plant after houseplant i killed, wilted
african violets and sagging easterlilies
drooped sadly on my windowsill. fortun-
ately, once i am infatuated with an idea
i pursue it relentlessly, often past the
point when any person with reasonable
expectations for herself would long have
abandoned such a seemingly hopeless project
but, in the spring of my sophomore year
of high school i built a raised bed in
my backyard and planted what was to become
my first anarchist's victory garden.

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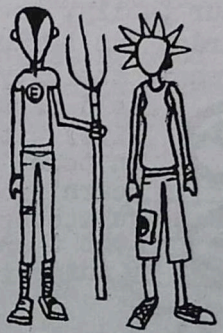
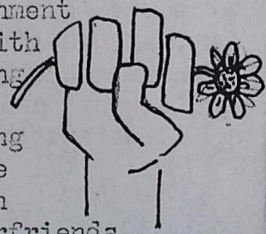
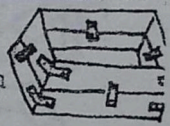


there is something inherently satisfying about growing your own food. a tomato picked five minutes ago from your own garden tastes infinitely better than a chemically-enhanced, genetically modified tomato picked weeks ago by underpaid workers and shipped hundreds of miles across the country in a huge truck spewing toxic fumes into the environment then unloaded and sprayed with more chemicals before landing in your local corporate-owned grocery store. getting your hands dirty is way more fun than television. you can do it by yourself, with your friends, your family, or your neighbors. a victory garden can be in the suburbs, rural, or even in the city. reclaim an abandoned field (assuming it's not a superfund site) with edible greenery. get in touch with your earthy side. learn from trial and error and do whatever feels right. just get out there and do it and have fun doing it.



first you're going to need land with at least 8 hours of direct sunlight per day in the summer. that's a lot, especially if your garden is in the city. buildings and large trees often hinder this. got your spot picked out? now you have two choices: a raised bed or a flat bed. a flatbed is just exposed dirt for growing things in. a raised bed is a wooden frame filled with topsoil. which bed you choose depends on when you want to do the hard labor. a raised bed (which i prefer) is a fair amount of work to build, but offers virtually weed-free gardening for every season after you build it. a flatbed is easier to build, but you will be pulling weeds forevermore.

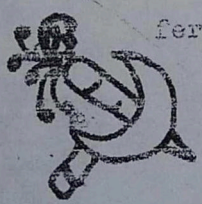
RAISED BED: take long pieces of wood and make a large rectangle-shaped frame. attatch the corners with galvinized-steel brackets. stand on it to make sure it doesn't fall over. it should be about one foot deep. if you are going to dumpster wood from a construction site (which is dangerous, illegal, and fun) please wear proper clothing so you don't get hurt.



now, kill any weeds or grass inside the frame by covering the ground with newspapers and weighing it down with rocks. leave it there until everything under it is dead or at least almost dead. now yo need some dirt to put in it. you can ei er make yourself a new pond (kidding!) o buy topsoil for pretty cheap (consult th yellow pages) they deliver it to your house and sort of halfway dump it into your garden. you have to shovel the res in. if you find any big chunks of clay in your topsoil, chuck 'em out. once yo have got all the dirt in your frame, hav a dance party, because the bulk of the ~~gh~~ prison labor is over!

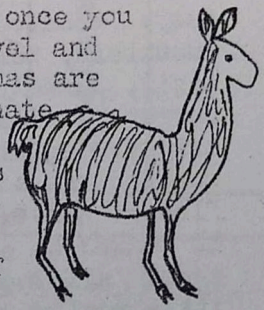
FLATBED: follow the same method as abov for killing weeds. ~~x~~pull up all the sod and grass, if there is any. then, turn the soil over with a shovel. that's pretty much it. proceed with dance part

FERTILIZER



fertilizer is quite important. not much will grow without i if you're vegan, you can use your own "humanure". but i swear by llama poo. most o th e fertiliz er bought at a

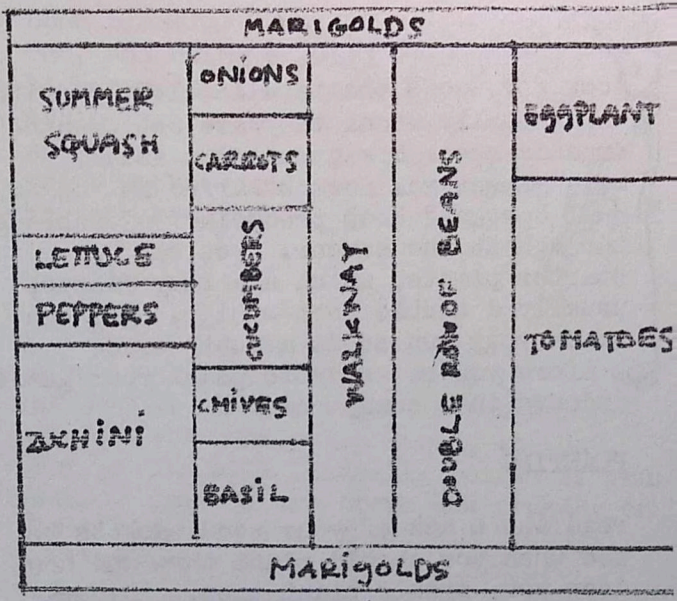
gardening supply store is cow manure. llamas, like cows, are ruminants (meaning they eat grass). but, since cows have had thier genes messed with far more than llamas (since cows are raised as food) they do not digest their food as completely as llamas do. horse manure presents a similar problem. talk to the owner of your nearest llama farm, or even a petting zoo. they will probably let you take as much manure as you can haul away, because that means they don't have to do it. once you get permission, get a shovel and some garbage bags. llamas are smart(ish) and they designate an area of their pasture for pooing, so that makes it easier on you. try to avoid fresh piles if you can. once you haul all of it to your garden, dig a shallow trench where each row of your garden will be. put a thin layer of fertilizer in the trenches and then recover it with the dirt. water it. repeat every early spring and late autumn.



PLANNING

obviously you should d grow things you lik
most common vegetables are relatively
easy to grow, but some can b e tricky.

easy: tomatoes, zuchinni, summer squash,
cucumbers, bell peppers, leaf lettuce,
basil, parsely, mint, chives, onions,
carrots, radishes, kale, pumpkins, watermel
tricky: eggplant, green beans, berries
not for the squeamish: broccoli and cauli-
flower get bugs really bad. they have to
be soaked in salt water before you can eat
them. all the bugs come out in the water.
itK's really gross.
draw up a plan of what you're going to plan
rows should be about a foot apart, so the
number of rows you have depends on the size
of your garden. i find it helpful to put a
gap between every two rows so that you have
somewhere to stand while you're picking.



!!'

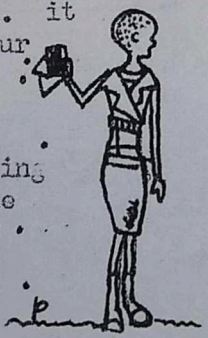
here is my garden plan for this year. ho
such as basil, parsely, chives, and orega
can b e grown in ordinary flower pots or
indoors, so don't worry if you don't have
room for them in your garden. rotate your
crops every year so the soil doesn't
get sucked dry of one nutrient in one spot

SEEDS

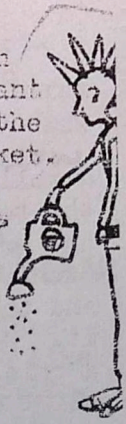
look for seeds that are labeled "heritage". this usually means they are not frankenfood. organic seeds are great, but usually more expensive. seeds marked as "conti nual harvest" keep producing vegetable s throughout the summer. you can buy starter plants, which are baby plants, usually a couble inches high. you can start your own seeds a month or so b efore you're ready to plant your garden indoors in a sunny room.

PLANTING

read the b ack of your seed packets to see when you should plant them and how deep you should plant them. it wi ll also tell you when your seeds should germinate, or sprout and how far apart you should plant them. the time to plant varies depending upon where you live, in the midwest, cold weather crops such as spinach and snow peas, are planted mid-march and most everything else is planted late may.



come planting time, get your plan out, and using a small spade, plant each seed in the planned row at the depth instructed on the seed packet. water it. you can use the empty seed packets and popsicle sticks to make row markers if you want.



WATERING

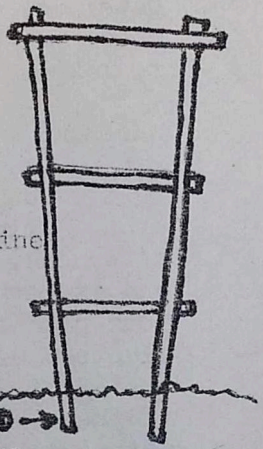
in the summer, water your plants around twiglight or very late afternoon. if you water in the morning and it gets really hot during the day, your plants will literally boil. if your plants' leav es are brown and crunchy on the edges, you aren't watering enough. if they are yellow or pale, you are watering too much. if it rains too much you can cover your plants and the ground wit h plastic until it stops raining.

PLANT SUPPORT

some plants, like tomatoes and most vine plants (cucumbers, pole beans, snow peas) need something to climb on as they grow. tomato cages ca be bought at the hardware

build a trellis ~~xxx~~ out of scrap wood or whatever you have lying around.

a trellis looks like this: the bottom parts stick into the ground and hold it up. put it over your baby plants and they will climb right up it. pole beans require just a pole, pipe, or stick to climb on. sometimes, if a vine won't climb, you can loosely tie it to the pole or trellis with string.



PESTS

no need to dump pesticides all over your food!. most bugs who will bother your plants can be kept away by spraying a mix of biodegradable soap (like 7th gener ation) and water on them once or twice a week. planting marigolds around the outside of your garden helps loads too, and attracts bees who will polinate your plants. if you have slugs, leave a shallow dish of beer flush with the ground.

the beer attracts them (slugs are notorious boozers) but when thet t ry to get some, they fall in and drown.

POTATO BUGS LOOK LIKE YELLOW LADYBUGS, BUT INSTEAD OF HELPING BY EATING APHIDS, POTATO BUGS MAKE HOLES IN BEANS

a gar den attracts all sorts of creatures displaced by suburbia. if youl don't like sharing your garden with deer and rabbits, you can put up a fence. put a stake at each corner and wrap fencing around it. i like thin plastic fence because it doesn't rust and people can easily climb over it. i do let the deer eat the apples from the tree in my yard, even if i don't share my garden.

HARVESTING

most crops are ready for harvest in late july or early august. keep harvesting continual plants until the first hard frost at which you should pick everything or else it will be mush by morning. if you are getting more cucumbers than you could ever eat, pinch off the flowers.

squash/zucchini/eggplants/cucumbers: let them grow to be 6 to 8 inches, no more or they will be toug h and gross.
tomatoes: pick before they are about fist-sized and completely red.
green beans: 3 inches, snap off ends before cooking/eating
leaf lettuce: clip one inch from ground, do not pull up by the roots!

tomatoes grow like mad, but can be made into pasta sauce, salsa, and can be canned for using in chili in the winter. cucumbers also grow fast and in abundance, so give lots away and ma ke pickles.

at th e end of the season, after it frosts hard, pull all your plants out except for leeks, onions, and pumpkins. fertilize. have a nice sa la d and teach someone else how to do it next year.

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AUGUSTINE ST. AUBIN

VEGETARIANS
TASTE
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